

Books and Benefits: A New Chapter in the Story of Libraries and Social Work Collaboration

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Abstract

Libraries began hiring social service professionals to be a part of the library staff in 2009 (Blank, 2014). Since then, the practice of having a social worker on staff or collaborating with local social service agencies is growing in popularity in many metropolitan areas. Libraries have become a place where many homeless people gather when shelters close for the day. Having a social worker on staff at a library helps provide people with the resources to meet their basic needs. Many libraries are still experimenting with the best ways to implement social work services and may benefit from the suggestions in a basic guide. The following two guides are presented in this paper: one for an urban library and one for a rural library. These guides contain general needs found in each area, potential service ideas, potential community partners and professional service providers, and resources tailored to the needs of both kinds of libraries.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Greta Slater for her help and support throughout this process. Thank you for your leadership and your example of how to be a good social worker in everyday life over the last four years.

I would also like to thank Clifton, Julie, Heidi, Ian, Philip, Janis, Ramona, Emily, and Sarah. I could not have done this without you. Thank you for walking through this crazy life with me.

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Process Analysis Statement

I have loved going to the library for as long as I can remember. My parents would take my siblings and me to the library on a weekly basis when we were children. Eventually, my sister and I were deemed old enough to ride our bikes the mile to the library in our town, and we could go whenever we wanted. I have fond memories of wandering around the stacks looking for a new, exciting book to read—browsing the titles until I found my next adventure. I read books that were simply a fun story to pass the time, but I also read books that would change my life. I wanted to be best friends with the March sisters and Anne of Green Gables, to fall in love the way Lizzie Bennet did, and to have a group of friends to solve crimes with like Trixie Belden. Libraries were a safe place for me to get lost, metaphorically and literally, throughout my life. Every once in a while I can still be found wandering through the stacks, soaking in the stillness, and looking for my next portal to a new world.

My interest in the intersection of social work and libraries began during the summer between my junior and senior years of college. I was a social work major and worked at the main library on campus. Because she knew of my interest in both fields, my mother mentioned an article she read called “Saving Lives in the Stacks” by Anne Ford. This article, which is included in my literature review, brings to light a new reality that many librarians are having to face: because libraries are one of the last free public spaces in our society and an opioid epidemic is sweeping our country, people go to libraries and get high. Ford presents suggestions for addressing this issue.

The information in that article is well researched and presents many good ideas for librarians, but, for me, the most important part of the article is the concept of bringing together social work and libraries. I had never realized that I could combine two of the things I am most

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passionate about in this way. I began to do more research on the topic and became really interested in the intersection between the two. The more I read, thought, and talked with other people about this topic, the more I realized that not only is collaboration between social work and libraries possible, but it presents numerous opportunities for the betterment of communities.

My research plan went through a few different iterations at the beginning, but ultimately I decided to compile information that could be used to create two guides for libraries that want to start collaborating or expand their collaboration with community partners: one guide for rural libraries and one for urban libraries. Each guide has sections on current services, potential services, potential community partners/professional service providers, and resources.

I was originally going to have one big guide that any library would be able to use, but as I was considering the services and community partners sections, I had to acknowledge that the New York City Public Library System is going to have access to very different resources than the Gas City Public Library. I decided to have one guide that would focus on the needs, services, and available partners for libraries in an urban setting and one that focused on libraries in a rural setting.

Once I decided what my project was going to look like I got to do my favorite part of this process: research. My approach to research is, "Hey! Look at this cool thing I found!" I loved being able to look at programs that other libraries have created and partnerships they have formed. There were articles full of stories from real people on how libraries partnering with social service organizations had been a lifeline for them. I was able to see how the ideas I was reading about actually benefited real people.

I learned a lot about myself and the world around me as I worked on my thesis this semester. But the most important thing I learned during this time is that my love of collaboration

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between outside forces stems from a need of collaboration for myself personally. I am an external processor and I work best when I have someone else off whom I can bounce ideas. I was able to work through problems I had with my thesis with those around me, and I know I am presenting a superior product because of that sharing of ideas. Collaboration in all its forms is vitally important to me because people bring different needs and life experiences to the table. These differences not only shape us as individuals, they also result in a variety of strengths to apply toward finding fully-orbed community solutions. The intersection of libraries and social work is just one example of how a multidisciplinary approach to community services brings the best of collaboration to meet significant needs in high-impact ways.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background

Public libraries have influenced American society since the inception of the nation. *The Library Company of Philadelphia*, arguably the oldest public library in the country, was founded by Benjamin Franklin and a group of his friends in 1731. This membership library allowed its members to borrow books and take them out of the building. This library still serves as an independent research library today. The *Sturgis Library*, found in Massachusetts, is the oldest building housing a public library. It was built in 1644 and is still a functioning public library. The *Library Company of Burlington* was founded in 1757 and is not only still a thriving public library, they also have all their records since the beginning of the library (Sturgis Library, 2017).

People have been gathering at libraries to learn and exchange ideas since before the United States was a country. They have been constant in a world full of change. Thanks to Andrew Carnegie, most towns throughout the United States have a library that anyone in that town can access (Stevenson, 2010). This simple fact causes libraries to be one of the most equitable places in society. Homeless people have the same rights to the information and space found in a public library that a millionaire does.

Because libraries are accessible to most of the population, librarians are called on to serve in many roles for which they often have no training or little knowledge. Jaeger and colleagues (2014) discuss many of the services provided by the library. The community often expects “free public Internet access and support, providing digital literacy and digital inclusion classes, supporting e-government, serving emergency response roles, and becoming increasingly involved in the provision of social services and education” (p 492).

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The San Francisco Public Library was the first library known to hire a social services worker as a part of their staff in 2009. Leah Esguerra, who is a licensed marriage and family therapist, was “hired through a partnership between the San Francisco Public Library (SFPL) and the San Francisco Department of Health/San Francisco Homeless Outreach Team” (Blank, 2014).

Esguerra has two main goals when working with the SFPL: to provide direct services to patrons and to train library staff about non-library services. Staff need specific training about basic needs, food, shelter, hygiene, and medical attention... library staff on issues of homelessness, mental health, and substance abuse services (Blank, 2014). Because of the growing interest in this kind of program among social workers and librarians, Esguerra also consults with libraries who want to hire a social worker. As of 2014, Esguerra had two team leaders and six health and safety associates who work in the main branch and do outreach to other branches. Many of the associates are formerly homeless people who have experienced the San Francisco social service system first-hand and can share that knowledge with others.

Statement of Purpose

This project was created to explore the need for and specific examples of collaboration between social services—specifically social workers—and libraries. The collaboration can be centered around physical, intellectual, or emotional services. Physical services include library staff allowing a service provider to use a table or two as a meeting place with clients. Intellectual services involve social workers giving library staff the tools to be able to help users with e-government problems. Emotional services might include a library hiring a social services liaison to help with counseling referrals. These services might be used in isolation or in any combination of those.

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This project consists of two guides for libraries or social service providers who want to gain information for how this type of collaboration has worked in the past and ideas for how to implement it in the future. One guide will focus on characteristics of libraries and social services found in rural settings and the other guide will focus characteristics of libraries and social services found in urban settings. This was deemed necessary because the needs and resources differ between rural and urban areas.

Terms

- Collaboration: The act of two or more organizations or teams working together toward a common goal
- E-government: “The employment of the Internet and the world-wide-web for delivering government information and services to the citizens” (United Nations, 2014)
- Social service agencies/organizations: Agencies that aim to build stronger and more effective communities and promote equality and opportunity; can be government, private, or nonprofit
- Patron: An individual who uses a service
- Urban: “Densely developed territory, and [encompasses] residential, commercial, and other non-residential land uses”; 2,500 people or more (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016)
- Rural: “All population, housing, and territory not included within an urban area” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016)

Organization of Paper

In the following chapters, I will review literature to show the need for and successful examples of collaboration between social workers and libraries. While this concept is relatively

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new, many libraries in metropolitan areas have been implementing programs that focus on some form of collaboration between social services and libraries. Chapter two explains the literature about the intersection of social services and libraries. Chapter three provides a guide for rural and urban libraries that want ideas for collaboration with local social workers and social service agencies. Each guide would be a six-page booklet containing the information presented here. The fourth chapter presents conclusions drawn from the research and the guides, limitations of this research, and further research still needed.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kelley and colleagues (2017) explored the intersection between social services and libraries. They are part of the Azusa Pacific University Department of Social Work in Azusa, California. A social work graduate-level class from Azusa Pacific University partnered with the Azusa City Librarian to study the needs of the local library, especially regarding hiring a social worker as a part of their staff.

The study focused on the city of Azusa in Los Angeles County which has a population of 46,361 (Kelley et al., 2017). The majority of the residents (68 percent) identify as Hispanic. According to Kelley and colleagues, over one-fifth of the inhabitants of Azusa live in poverty and the educational attainment and median earnings are far below the national average. At the beginning of the experiment, the library was already an important part of the local community and offered many resources, including, books, movies, music, and Internet access. Programing also included adult literacy, technology training, language instruction, citizenship preparation, and after-school tutoring for children (Kelley et al., 2017).

The team of eleven graduate social work students worked closely with librarians to collect data about the needs of library patrons. The data were collected in three groups: library staff, library patrons, and the greater community of libraries. The graduate students conducted interviews with staff members, face-to-face surveys with patrons, and an online scan of library resources in the county, specifically focusing on library services and programs (Kelley et al., 2017).

The researchers found that having a social worker on staff would be beneficial for the staff members and patrons. The benefit, as described by staff members, was the training and

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general knowledge of social workers who have the expertise to work with people in need and a knowledge of local social services and community supports. The services most requested by patrons were resources for children, including computer education, tutoring, and literacy assistance. The second-most-requested services were focused on basic needs resources such as health care, food, resources, and employment services (Kelley et al., 2017). Having a social worker on staff would enable a library to best assist patrons with the second set of requests.

Kelly and colleagues suggested that the library partner with local community organizations such as communities of faith, the local school district, city councils, and mental health facilities in the area in addition to the services the library already offers. One critical benefit of library assets is that they are funded by taxes rather than individuals, so the resources are available to anyone. Libraries are institutions that subtly work to bridge the gaps in society. “As long as there is a disparity of resources and information, the disenfranchised will remain on the fringes; local libraries can ensure that this disparity continues to diminish” (Kelley et al., 2017, p 122).

Because libraries should be safe places where people can gather information, librarians can be called upon to try to help a patron in crisis. Westbrook (2015) explores a service model for librarians to assist with patrons in crisis. Westbrook presents the idea of the *ambiguity of the librarian/social worker dichotomy* and the struggles faced daily because of the demands placed on librarians. Because many libraries have a strong community presence, with opportunities such as community programming and almost universally accessible resources, a public library can also be viewed as a gateway to social services. Although some librarians have personal knowledge of local social services or have picked up information over their years working at a library, most librarians have not received training on helping patrons access social services, especially when

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the patron might be in crisis. This takes a skill set that many librarians feel unprepared to provide. Westbrook provides a strong argument for the need for social workers and librarians to partner in some way.

Westbrook (2015) outlines four focuses for information service providers and strategies for the best outcome when assisting users in crisis and she gives strategies for the best outcome. These focuses are crisis, specialized service agencies, general service agencies, and transcendent perceptions. Each focus has at least one strategy to best assist a patron in crisis.

Patron self-identity contextualized by the crisis is the first reference service focus. Westbrook states that the librarian must interact with the patron in a way that supports the shifting identity of an individual in crisis and is nonjudgmental of the lack of movement toward an attainable goal.

The first strategy for interaction with a patron in crisis is to understand crisis-driven pacing and intensity. Although an individual has information at their disposal, they may choose not to use it. “[Information] becomes more of a talisman than an actual resource for change” (Westbrook, 2015). Westbrook also points out that as the identity of the patron is in constant flux, their information needs may vary radically without the information gathered seeming to have any effect. Allow these shifts to take place and provide the individual with as much information as possible.

The second strategy for interacting with patrons in crisis is to focus on engaging with the patron and not trying to solve their problems. Librarians provide useful information and they can offer tailored information based on the patron’s needs. When sharing information, it is important to present it in such a way that the vast difference of each circumstance is acknowledged.

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Patron self-identity via specialized agencies is Westbrook's second reference service focus. This idea focuses on the fact that most patrons in crisis have interacted and will continue to interact with people in specialized agencies, such as police and domestic violence shelter counselors. The first strategy is to encourage information evaluation skills. Help the patron grow confidence in their ability to assess the service options available to them. Another strategy is to provide consistent indicators of social respect. Many specialized agencies focus on the "vulnerability of abuse" (Westbrook, 2015). Focus on showing respect instead of sympathy or judgment to the patron and respect the boundaries they put in place.

Patron self-identity via generalized agencies is the third reference service focus. Service providers in generalized agencies, such as Family and Social Services Administration, are often not trained in dealing with clients in crisis. One strategy is to help the patron to frame their experiences within the agency requirements. This allows them to tell their story while still getting the services they need.

Patron self-identity via transcendent perceptions is the final reference service focus. This is a way to help patrons use their strengths-based self-perception in one area of their life to positively affect other areas as well. A strategy for this focus is to recognize the negative affect concentrating on overarching social norms and assumptions can have. Help patrons to think critically about the world around them and not allow other people's perceptions to impact their self-identity.

Ruhlmann (2014) explores how libraries can provide support and a safe space to people in a community, focusing on the homeless population. She provides examples from cities across the United States, including Madison, WI; Chicago, IL; and San Francisco, CA.

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One of Ruhlmann's sources is a woman called "Jane," who is chronically homeless—an individual who has been continuously homeless for more than one year or who has experienced four or more episodes of homelessness in the past three years. For Jane, the library is one of the few places she can go and not worry about status or financial means. "She's entitled to the same services and treatment as the person standing next to her in a designer coat" (Ruhlmann, 2014, p 2). This is one of the most important benefits that a library can provide to anyone, but especially to a homeless person—a sense of equality. Homeless people are often treated with pity or contempt as they function from day to day, but having access to a library can provide services that act as a gateway to a potentially better life. They can use the internet to keep up to date on what is occurring in the world or to find job applications and housing opportunities.

One of the less obvious but still important resources that the library provides is clearly defined boundaries for personal space. According to Jane, most homeless people sleep on the street in groups, without a clear, permanent boundary that delineates their personal space. At the library, they have a computer pod or a table that, for the time that they are there, is their personal space that cannot be encroached upon. As Jane puts it, "That's gold" (Ruhlmann, 2014, p 4).

Ruhlmann also presents struggles faced by librarians and those creating policies for public libraries. Anne Haimes, Interim Director of the Atlanta-Fulton Public Library System in Georgia, states the most difficult part for many librarians and library systems is to find a balance so that "everyone who comes in feels safe and comfortable" (Ruhlmann, 2014). She emphasizes that being flexible and trying to work with all patrons is key to finding that balance.

Jill Bourne, a Head Librarian at San Jose Public Library in California, shares that they are also careful to ensure that the policies implemented are broad enough to enact throughout the library's entire user base (Ruhlmann, 2014). For example, college students often fall asleep at the

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library during exam times or have large projects with them, but they are left alone. There are different standards for people who are homeless. There is a risk of “profiling based on poverty,” if everyone is not held to the same standards regarding library policy (Ruhlmann, 2014).

There are many ways that libraries and local social service agencies can work together to benefit their community. Partnerships between libraries and local services are often one of the best ways to address the needs of the community, especially the homeless population. One strategy is to “form a provider web” (Ruhlmann, 2014). Libraries are already a hub of information, and through community partnerships, they can expand the resources available to their patrons. Another strategy is to bring resources in-house (Ruhlmann, 2014). Many libraries in urban areas have a social worker or team of social workers on their staff to assist users with issues ranging from finding housing and jobs to brief therapy sessions.

Other ideas presented by Ruhlmann include offering targeted programs, creating welcoming spaces, and getting rid of housing requirements for owning a library card. The most important idea is to train all library staff on how to interact with homeless people. Ryan Dowd (2013) created a video called *A Librarian's Guide to Homelessness* that is targeted toward librarians who work in areas with a large homeless population. There is more to the situation than Dowd presents in his video, but it provides a beginning foundation for librarians who suddenly need a skill set with which they are completely unfamiliar.

Many of the public libraries' strengths can also become their greatest weaknesses. Ford (2017) points out that there are few limits on how long people can stay and few, if any, requirements for identification. Because of this library are uniquely vulnerable to those seeking a place to use drugs. The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County experienced about 50 overdoses in 2014 on library property, almost one per week (Ford, 2014). Many librarians are

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being trained to administer Narcan in cases of opioid overdose and safely dispose of needles found on the property (Ford, 2017). This is a problem that is not going away anytime soon, and librarians are starting to arm themselves with the tools at their disposal.

Narcan is the brand name of a drug called *naloxone*, a medication that reverses the effects of an opioid overdose by preventing the opioid from reaching the brain (Ford, 2017). Narcan comes in nasal spray and injection forms and many libraries are starting to keep both forms on hand in case of an overdose in the near vicinity. The Central Library, in the Denver Public Library system, began stocking Narcan and training their staff to administer it after a patron overdosed and died in the library bathroom. “The library bought 12 Narcan kits in February. By May, it had used seven of them” (Ford, 2017). Addiction is a problem that is not going away anytime soon and librarians are starting to arm themselves with the tools at their disposal.

While the cost and training required is a barrier for some libraries, there is no downside to stocking and using Narcan. Using Narcan on a person who is not overdosing on an opioid does not harm them and there is no known way overdose on Narcan. Some people posit that having Narcan on hand is an invitation to people to come get high in a public library, but Humboldt County librarian, Kitty Yancheff likens it to CPR: “just another thing in [their] first-aid resource kit” (Ford, 2017).

There are other safety concerns in addition to someone overdosing. One concern that many libraries are struggling with is drug needles being left on the property. Librarians have begun finding needles left outside, on the floor in the bathrooms, and even flushed down the toilet. A two-pronged solution that many libraries are embracing is installing needle-disposal boxes in public restrooms and training staff in how to safely dispose of needles. Specialty sharps collection teams are then called to empty the boxes when need be.

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Another safety concern is people overdosing in the public bathrooms. Some libraries have combated this problem by having users show identification at the main desk before they are allowed into the bathroom, but many libraries have found this to be an unsustainable practice. Other libraries, especially those with single-stall bathrooms, keep the bathrooms locked and the patron must get a key from the front desk. If the key is not returned within a set amount of time someone will go knock on the door and check on the patron. Some libraries have their security team patrol the bathrooms on a regular basis. They found that the knowledge that someone was going to be around soon was enough of a deterrent.

Chant (2017) provides an example of libraries and social workers going beyond interdisciplinary collaboration to including community members as a part of their outreach team. In 2017, the Denver Public Library (DPL) added three community members, called *Peer Navigators*, to their staff, which already included two full-time social workers. The purpose of the Peer Navigators is to provide assistance by people who already have gone through the system and know how to function within it. The DPL's spokesperson, Chris Henning, referred to it as "lived experience, meaning they are in recovery and have found stabilization" (Chant, 2017, p 20). Their current plan is to meet one-on-one with library patrons in need of services and to hold peer discussion groups to help develop a stronger community in these vulnerable populations.

Peer Navigators have the ability to provide advice based on personal experience that most social workers cannot offer. The Peer Navigators can help bridge the gap between clients and service providers both ways. Elissa Hardy, a social worker at DPL, stresses the importance of this program in creating trust between library users and providers, especially the Navigators. "When we are able to talk to someone who has had a similar experience, we feel more comfortable with their guidance and with the relationship as a whole" (Chant, 2017, p 20). The

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Navigators bridge the gap in other ways as well. Peer Navigators bring the experiences of the clients to the service providers and help the service providers identify problems in their current system. For example, Hardy discusses “choke points in their application process or ways that their work flows can be simplified for clients” are areas in which Peer Navigators are uniquely qualified to assist service providers (Chant, 2017).

Thus far all of the concepts discussed focus mainly on social workers or those who act in the stead of social workers—in this case, the Peer Navigators. The library, as an institution, also plays an important role here as well. The physical building the library is housed in is a safe and familiar environment for many people in need of services. Most likely many clients have already been to the local library. Instead of having to go to an unknown agency in a geographic location they have never experienced, they can go to a building they know how to navigate, in a geographic location they are familiar with, and which is staffed with people whom they know.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE GUIDES

Urban Guide**Current Services**

Libraries provide many services for the members of the community that go beyond the books on the shelves. These services generally fall into four categories: social services, education, e-government, and community. Keep in mind that although these services are being allocated to categories, most of them could also be placed in other categories and many of them overlap.

Social services. Most of the services that people need when they come to the library fall into the category of social services. Many people who use the internet access that the library provides look for housing, education opportunities, jobs, or legal assistance. They will often ask the librarian on staff questions about these topics as well.

Education. Libraries are often used for education resources as well. Obvious resources include books, magazines, encyclopedias, computers, and other technology. One of the less obvious but still often utilized educational uses for libraries is the space. Libraries are wonderful places for people to go and study, in groups or individually, and libraries often have meeting rooms that can be used for educational classes.

E-government. A new and growing service that librarians are being called on to perform is e-government assistance. Many governmental interactions take place online today. People have to go through many steps to find exactly the right form on exactly the right website and then turn it in to exactly the right place—all without a human being to lead them through the

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process and answer their questions. With no one else to turn to, people who are trying to navigate this process in a public library often turn to the librarian to help them.

Community. Libraries also hold a sense of community. Almost anyone in the community can access the public library and take part in the services offered there. Libraries often host events that are free to the community, such as speakers or special interest groups. They are safe places for people to gather and spend time together

Potential Services

Social services.

1. Have a dedicated space for local social workers to interact with patrons twice a week.
2. Hold classes that help people create a résumé every other week.
3. Have Narcan kits at the library and train librarians to administer them.

Education.

1. Host GED study groups regularly.
2. Host monthly trainings/classes/presentations led by various specialists or community members.
3. Host Individual Education Plan support meetings.

E-government and legal concerns.

1. Train one or two librarians in assisting patrons with online e-government spaces.
2. Invite lawyers in the area to do monthly pro-bono legal advice sessions.
3. Provide space of people to do their taxes during tax season. Invite financial planners to come assist.

Community.

1. Host a bi-weekly knitting group that anyone from the community can join.

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2. Host monthly community movie nights outside during the warm months.
3. Host health screenings with a public health nurse.
4. Provide space for weekly Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings.

Potential Community Partners/Professional Service Providers**Social services.**

1. Local social service organizations (youth shelters, mental health facilities, LGBTQ+ organizations)
2. Local college volunteer organizations (school-lead, sororities/fraternities)

Education.

1. Students from local college classes who must volunteer to meet course requirements
2. Local educators (elementary, middle, high school, college)

E-government and legal concerns.

1. Local law firms
2. Local social service organizations (FSSA, housing assistance, voter registration)

Community.

1. Local businesses in the community
2. Local vendors/distributors
3. Branch libraries or libraries in neighboring towns

Resources.

1. Web Junction - <https://www.webjunction.org/>
2. Public Library Association - <http://www.ala.org/pla/>

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3. The Librarian Is In podcast - <https://www.nypl.org/voices/blogs/blog-channels/librarian-is-in>
4. Urban Libraries Council - <https://www.urbanlibraries.org/>

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Rural Guide

Current Services

Libraries provide many services for the members of the community that go beyond the books on the shelves. These services generally fall into four categories: social services, education, e-government, and community. Keep in mind that although these services are being allocated to categories, most of them could be in other categories and many of them overlap.

Social services. Most of the services that people need when they come to the library fall into the category of social services. Many people who use the internet access that the library provides look for housing, education opportunities, jobs, or legal assistance. They will often also ask the librarian on staff questions about these topics as well.

Education. Libraries are often used for education resources as well. Obvious resources include books, magazines, encyclopedias, computers, and other technology. One of the less obvious but still often utilized educational uses for libraries is the space. Libraries are wonderful places for people to go and study, in groups or individually, and libraries often have meeting rooms that can be used for educational classes.

E-government. A new and growing service that librarians are being called on to perform is e-government assistance. Many governmental interactions take place online today. People have to go through many steps to find exactly the right form on exactly the right website and then turn it in to exactly the right place—all without a human being to lead them through the process and answer their questions. With no one else to turn to, people who are trying to navigate this process in a public library often turn to the librarian to help them.

Community. Libraries also hold a sense of community. Almost anyone in the community can access the public library and take part in the services offered there. Libraries often host

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events that are free to the community, such as speakers or special interest groups. They are safe places for people to gather and spend time together.

Potential Services

Social services.

1. Have a dedicated space for local social workers to interact with patrons once a week.
2. Invite a local Veterans' Affairs liaison and veterans to use the space for bi-weekly meetings.
3. Have Narcan kits at the library and train librarians to administer them.

Education.

1. Host GED study groups regularly.
2. Host monthly trainings/classes/presentations through webcast led by various specialists from surrounding areas.

E-government and legal concerns.

1. Train one or two librarians in assisting patrons with online e-government spaces.
2. Invite lawyers in surrounding areas to do bi-monthly pro-bono legal advice sessions.
These can also be done through webcasting.

Community.

1. Host a bi-weekly knitting group that anyone from the community can join.
2. Host monthly dinner that everyone from the community is invited to.
3. Host or sponsor a monthly farmers market where local farmers and other vendors can sell their wares.

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Potential Community Partners/Professional Service Providers

Social services.

1. Local social service organizations (soup kitchens, Township Trustee, YMCA/YWCA)
2. Veterans' Affairs personnel
3. Local low or no cost medical centers

Education.

1. Local teachers or professors from community colleges
2. Specialists who are willing to webcast in

E-government and legal.

1. Law firms who are willing to webcast in
2. Local social service organizations (FSSA, FAFSA, healthcare personnel)

Community.

1. Local businesses in the community
2. Local 4H chapter
3. Local county community foundation

Resources.

1. Web Junction - <https://www.webjunction.org/>
2. Public Library Association - <http://www.ala.org/pla/>
3. The Association for Rural and Small Libraries - <https://arsl.info/>
4. The Small but Powerful Guide to Winning Big Support for Your Rural Library - <http://www.ala.org/aboutala/offices/olos/toolkits/rural>

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CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSIONS

Limitations

One limitation of this project is the inability to discuss every possible scenario. Because every community has different needs and resources, these guides will not be able to address every way the collaboration might be possible between social service providers and community libraries. But the ideas presented in the guides will give librarians a place from which to start. Another limitation of this project is that all the information used in this project was gathered from previously published sources. There is no new statistical data presented here.

Further Research

Because this field originated in the last ten years, it is likely there are no longitudinal studies on the effect of collaboration between libraries and social services on a community. This kind of study would help inform practices put in place by libraries. There is also a lack of information surrounding libraries in rural areas partnering with social service agencies. As this practice becomes more widespread in urban areas, libraries in rural areas might be able to implement some of the ideas that are more suited to their community. Studying the intersection between the needs of rural communities and the resources of local libraries and social service agencies would be beneficial to accelerating the implementation process.

Conclusions

Librarians are being called on to act as de facto social workers because of the unique position of libraries as a free place, open to all. Many librarians have stepped up to the challenge. But others do not feel equipped to provide the services these patrons are seeking. Having a social worker on staff or collaborating with local social service agencies is the best way to get patrons

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the services they desperately need while allowing librarians to acknowledge that they are not actually social workers. They have not been trained to provide these services.

Libraries have the ability to act as a portal to different worlds. These worlds can be accessed through the books on the shelves or through the ability to access the internet and feel connected to the world. For some patrons, libraries are a safe haven in the storm of life. At their best, libraries are a place that everyone, regardless of their race, gender, sexuality, or socioeconomic status, can come and be treated equally. Not many places like that remain in this polarizing world. It is important to maintain such locations within our communities and strive to make them better through collaboration with others.

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